

"OUTWITTING THE HUN"

By LIEUTENANT PAT O'BRIEN

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CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

I decided promptly that the safest place for me was as far back as possible, where I would not be in the line of vision of others in back of me. Accordingly I slouched over to a table on the platform directly opposite the stage and I took the seat against the wall. The whole place was now in front of me. I could see everything that was going on and everyone who came in, but no one, except those who sat at my own table, would notice me unless they deliberately turned around to look.

The place began to fill up rapidly. Every second person who came in the place seemed to me to be a German soldier, but when they were seated at the tables and I got a chance later on to make a rough count, I found that in all there were not more than a hundred soldiers in the place and there must have been several hundred civilians.

The first people to sit at my table were a Belgian and his wife. The Belgian had one honest mouthful of food than all the drinks in the world. The item I refer to was "Dubbel Gersten de Flesch (Michaux)." A double portion of anything would have been mighty welcome to me, but I would have been content with a single "gersten" if I had only had the courage to ask for it.

To keep myself as composed as possible I devoted a lot of attention to that bill-of-fare, and I think by the time the waiter came around I almost knew it by heart. One drink that almost made me laugh aloud was listed as "Lemonades gazeuses," but I might as well have introduced myself to the German officers by my right name and rank as attempt to pronounce it.

When the waiter came to me, therefore, I said "Bock" as casually as I could, and I felt somewhat relieved that I had gotten through that part of the ordeal so easily.

While the waiter was away I had a chance to examine the bill-of-fare and I observed that a glass of beer cost 89 centimes. The smallest change I had was a two-mark paper bill.

Apparently the German officers were similarly fixed and when they offered their bill to the waiter, he handed it back to them with a remark which I took to mean that he couldn't make change.

Right there I was in a quandary. To offer him my bill after he had just told the officers he didn't have change would have seemed strange, and yet I couldn't explain to him that I was in the same boat and he would have to come to me again later. The only thing to do, therefore, was to offer him the bill as though I hadn't heard or noticed what had happened with the Germans, and I did so. He said the same thing to me as he had said to the officers, perhaps a little more sharply, and gave me back the bill. Later on, he returned to the table with a handful of change and we closed the transaction. I gave him 25 centimes as a tip—I had never yet been to a place where it was necessary to talk to do that.

During my first half hour in that theatre, to say I was on pins and needles is to express my feelings mildly. The truth of the matter is I was never so uneasy in my life. Every minute seemed like an hour, and a dozen times I was on the point of getting up and leaving. There were altogether too many soldiers in the place to suit me, and when the German officers seated themselves right at my table I thought that was about all I could stand. As it was, however, the lights went out shortly afterwards and in the dark I felt considerably easier.

After the first picture, when the lights went up again, I had regained my composure considerably and I took advantage of the opportunity to study the various types of people in the place.

From my seat I had a splendid chance to see them all. At one table there was a German medical corps officer with three Red Cross nurses. That was the only time I had ever seen a German nurse, for when I was in the hospital I had seen only men orderlies. Nurses didn't work so near the first line trenches.

The German soldiers at the different tables were very quiet and orderly. They drank bock beer and conversed among themselves, but there was no hilarity or rough-housing of any kind.

As I sat there, within arm's reach of those German officers and realized that they would have given to know what a chance they had to capture an escaped British officer, I could hardly help smiling to myself, but when I thought of the big risk I was taking, more or less unnecessarily, I began to wonder whether I had not acted foolishly in undertaking it.

Nevertheless, the evening passed off uneventfully and when the show was over I mixed with the crowd and disappeared, feeling very proud of myself and with a good deal more confidence than I had enjoyed at the start.

I had passed a night which will live in my life as long as I live. The bill of fare and program and a "throw-away" bill advertising the name of the attraction, which was to be presented the following week which was handed to me as I came out, I still have and they are among the most valued souvenirs of my adventure.

As I wandered through the streets I frequently glanced in the cafe window as I passed. German officers were usually dining there, but they didn't conduct themselves with anything like the light-heartedness which characterizes the allied officers in London and Paris. I was rather surprised at this because in this part of Belgium they were much freer than they would have been in Berlin, where, I understand, food is comparatively scarce and the restrictions are very strict.

As I have said, my own condition in this city was in some respects worse than it had been when I was making my way through the open country. While I had a place to sleep and my clothes were no longer constantly soaking, my opportunities for getting food were considerably less than they had been. Nearly all the time I was half famished, and I decided that I would get out of there at once, since I was entirely without Huylijer.

My physical condition was greatly improved. While the lack of food showed itself on me, I had regained some of my strength, my wounds were healed, and my ankle was stronger, and although my knees were still considerably enlarged, I felt that I was in better shape than I had been at any time since my leap from the train, and I was ready to go through whatever was in store for me.

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There are many things that I saw in this city which, for various reasons, it is impossible for me to relate until after the war is over. Some of them, I think, will create more surprise than the incidents I am free to reveal now.

It used to amuse me as I went along the streets of this town, looking in the shop windows with German soldiers at my side looking at the same things, to think how close I was to them and they had no way of knowing. I was quite convinced that if I were discovered my fate would have been death because I not only had the forged passport on me, but I had been so many days behind the German lines after I had escaped that they couldn't safely let me live with the information I possessed.

One night I walked boldly across a park. I heard footsteps behind me and turning round saw two German soldiers. I slowed up a trifle to let them get ahead of me. It was rather dark and I got a chance to see what a wonderful uniform the German military authorities had picked out. The soldiers had not gone more than a few feet ahead of me when they disappeared in the darkness like one of those melting pictures on the moving picture screen.

CHAPTER XV.

Observations in a Belgian City.

One night shortly before I left this city, our airman raided the place. I didn't venture out of the house at the time, but the next night I thought I would go out and see what damage had been done.

When it became dark I left the house accordingly and mixed with the crowd, which consisted largely of Germans. I went from one place to another to see what our "strawling" had accomplished. Naturally I avoided speaking to anyone. If a man or woman appeared about to speak to me, I just turned my head and looked or walked away in some other direction. I must have been taken for an unusual sort of individual a good many

times, and if I had encountered the same person twice I suppose my conduct might have aroused suspicion.

I had a first-class observation of the damage that was really done by our bombs. One bomb had landed very near the main railroad station and if it had been only thirty yards nearer would have completely demolished it. As the station was undoubtedly our airman's objective I was very much impressed with the accuracy of his aim. It is by no means an easy thing to hit a building from the air when you are going at anywhere from fifty to one hundred at miles an hour and are being shot at from beneath from a dozen different angles—unless, of course, you are taking one of those desperate chances and flying so low that you cannot very well miss your mark and the Huns can't very well miss you either!

I walked by the station and mingled with the crowds which stood in the entrances. They paid no more attention to me than they did to real Belgians, and the fact that the lights were all out in this city at night made it impossible anyway for anyone to get as good a look at me as if it had been light.

During the time that I was in this city I suppose I wandered from one end of it to the other. In one place, where the German staff had its headquarters, a huge German flag hung from the window, and I think I would have given ten years of my life to have pulled it down, however, it would have been impossible for me to have concealed it, and to have carried it away with me as a souvenir, therefore would have been out of the question.

As I went along the street one night a lady standing on the corner stopped me and spoke to me. My first impulse, of course, was to answer her, explaining that I could not understand, but I stopped myself in time, pointed to my ears and mouth and shook my head, indicating that I was deaf and dumb, and she nodded understandingly and walked on. Incidents of that kind were not unusual, and I was always in fear that the time would come when some inquisitive and suspicious German would encounter me and not be so easily satisfied.

CHAPTER XVI.

I Leave for the Frontier.

To get out of the city, it would be necessary to pass two guards. This I had learned in the course of my walks at night, having frequently traveled to the city limits with the idea of finding out just what conditions I would have to meet when the time came for me to leave.

A German soldier's uniform, however, no longer worried me as it had at first. I had mingled with the Huns so much in the city that I began to feel that I was really a Belgian, and I assumed the indifference that they seemed to feel.

I decided, therefore, to walk out of the city in the daytime, when the sentries would be less apt to be on the watch. It worked fine. I was not held up a moment, the sentries evidently taking me for a Belgian peasant on his way to work.

Traveling faster than I had ever done before since my escape, I was soon out in the open country, and the first Belgian I came to I approached for food. He gave me half of his lunch and we sat down on the side of the road to eat it. Of course, he tried to talk to me, but I used the old ruse of pretending I was deaf and dumb and he was quite convinced that it was so. He made various efforts to talk to me in pantomime, but I could not make out what he was getting at, and I think he must have concluded that I was not only half starved, deaf and dumb, but "looney" in the bargain.

When night came I looked around for a place to rest. I had decided to travel in the daytime as well as night, because I understood that it was only a few miles from the frontier, and I was naturally anxious to get there at the earliest possible moment, although the most hazardous part of my whole adventure. To get through the heavily guarded barbed wire and electrically charged barrier was a problem that I hated to think of even, although the hours I spent endeavoring to devise

some way of outwitting the Huns were many.

It had occurred to me, for instance, that it would not be such a difficult matter to vault over the electric fence, which was only nine feet high. In college, I knew a ten-foot vault is considered a high-school boy's accomplishment, but there were two great difficulties in the way of this solution. In the first place it would be no easy matter to get a pole of the right length, weight and strength to serve the purpose. More particularly, however, the pole-vault idea seemed to me to be out of the question because of the fact that on either side of the electric fence, six feet from it, was a six-foot barbed wire barrier. To vault safely over a nine-foot electrically charged fence was one thing, but to combine with it a twelve-foot broad vault was a feat which even a college athlete in the pink of condition would be apt to flunk. Indeed, I don't believe it is possible.

Another plan that seemed half-way reasonable was to build a pair of stilts about twelve or fourteen feet high and walk over the barriers one by one. As a youngster I had acquired considerable skill in still-walking and I have no doubt that with the proper equipment it would have been quite feasible to have walked out of Belgium as easily as possible in that way, but whether or not I was going to have a chance to construct the necessary stilts remained to be seen.

There were a good many bicycles in use by the German soldiers in Belgium and it had often occurred to me that if I could have stolen one, the tires would have made excellent gloves and insulated coverings for my feet in case it was necessary for me to attempt to climb over the electric fence bodily. But as I had never been able to steal a bicycle this avenue of escape was closed to me.

I decided to wait until I arrived at the barrier and then make up my mind how to proceed.

To find a decent place to sleep that night, I crawled under a barbed wire fence, thinking it led into some field. As I passed under, one of the bars caught in my coat and in trying to pull myself from it I shook the fence for several yards.

Instantly there came out of the night the nerve-racking command: "Halt!"

Again I feared I was done for. I crouched close down on the ground in the darkness, not knowing whether to take to my legs and trust to the Huns' missing me in the darkness if he fired, or stay where I was. It was foggy as well as dark, and although I knew the sentry was only a few feet away from me I decided to stand, or rather lie, flat. I think my heart made almost as much noise as the rattling of the wire in the first place, and it was a tense few moments to me.

I heard the German say a few words to himself, but didn't understand them, of course, and then he made a sound as if to call a dog, and I realized that his theory of the noise he had heard was that a dog had made its way through the fence.

For perhaps five minutes I didn't stir, and then figuring that the German had probably continued on his beat I crept quietly under the wire again, this time being mighty careful to hug the ground so close that I wouldn't touch the wire, and made off in a different direction. Evidently the barbed wire fence had been thrown around an ammunition depot or something of the kind, and it was not a field at all that I had tried to get into.

I figured that other sentries were probably in the neighborhood and I proceeded very gingerly.

After I had got about a mile away from this spot I came to an humble Belgian house and I knocked at the door and applied for food in my usual way, pointing to my mouth to indicate I was hungry and to my ears and mouth to imply that I was deaf and dumb. The Belgian woman who lived in the house brought me a piece of bread and two cold potatoes and as I sat there eating them she eyed me very keenly.

I haven't the slightest doubt that she realized I was a fugitive. She lived so near the border that it was more fully the extent of the risk she ran, for no doubt the Germans were constantly watching the conduct of these Belgians who lived near the line.

My theory that she realized that I was not a Belgian at all, but probably some English fugitive, was confirmed a moment later, when, as I made ready to go, she touched me on the arm and indicated that I was to wait a moment. She went to a bureau and brought out two pieces of fancy Belgian lace which she insisted upon my taking away, although at that particular moment I had as much use for Belgian lace as an elephant for a safety razor, but I was touched with her thoughtfulness and pressed her hand to show my gratitude. She would not accept the money I offered her.

I carried the lace through my subsequent experiences, feeling that it would be a fine souvenir for my mother, although as a matter of fact I had known that it was going to de-

lay my final escape for even a single moment, as it did, I am quite sure she would rather I had not seen it.

On one piece of lace was the Flemish word "Charite" and on the other the word "Esperage." At the time I took these words to mean "Charity" and "Experience" and all I hoped was that I would get as much of the one as I was getting of the other before I finally got through. I learned subsequently that what the words really stood for were "Charity" and "Hope," and then I was sure that my kind Belgian friend had indeed realized my plight and that her thoughtful souvenir was intended to encourage me in the trials she must have known were before me.

I didn't let the old Belgian lady know, because I did not want to alarm her unnecessarily, but that night I slept in her backyard, leaving early in the morning before it became light.

Later in the day I applied at another house for food. It was occupied by a father and mother and ten chil-

CHAPTER XVII.

Again I Feared I Was Done For.

I hesitated to ask them for food without offering to pay for it, as I realized what a task it must have been for them to support themselves without having to feed a hungry man. Accordingly I gave the man a mark and then indicated that I wanted something to eat. They were just about to eat, themselves, apparently, and they let me partake of their meal, which consisted of a huge bowl of some kind of soup which I was unable to identify and which they served in ordinary wash basins. I don't know that they ever used the basins to wash in as well, but whether they did or not did not worry me very much. The soup was good and I enjoyed it.

All the time I was there I could see the father and the eldest son, a boy about seventeen, were extremely nervous. I had indicated to them that I was deaf and dumb, but if they believed me it didn't seem to make them any more comfortable.

I lingered at the house for about an hour after the meal and during that time a young man came to call on the eldest daughter, a young woman of perhaps eighteen. The caller eyed me very suspiciously, although I must have resembled anything but a British officer. They spoke Flemish and I did not understand a word they said, but I think they were discussing my probable identity. During their conversation, I had a chance to look around the room. There were three altogether, two fairly large and one somewhat smaller, about fourteen feet long and six deep. In this smaller room there were two double-decked beds, which were apparently intended to house the whole family, although how the whole twelve of them could sleep in that one room will ever remain a mystery to me.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

Wall of a Lost Soul.

This is not a camp story, but one written by a lieutenant on his way "over there." "On our first lap out we were having hot drill one day. The bell rang and every one grabbed up life preservers and started for their lifeboats. As I came out on the main deck to boat No. 10 one of the aft guns let loose with a terrific roar at target practice. Just then a big negro came up scrambling out of a hatchway, yelling, 'O, Lordy, Lordy, where am mah life deserter? I done heah dat submarine-a-mountin' for mah soul!'"

Free From Conceit.

"I am glad to see you are free from that conceit which prompts professional jealousy," said the man who assumes a patronizing and paternal manner. "Well," said the young actor, indignantly, "to tell you the truth, I haven't seen any actors whose work suggested any reason whatever for my being jealous."

CHAPTER XIX.

Price List of Drinks O'Brien Picked Up at a Free Motion Picture Show in a Beer Garden.

Prijzen der Dranken	
Bieren	
Bock 12 0.80	Stiel de B. 1.25
Dubbel Geraten de flesch (Michaux) 0.85	
Warme Dranken	
Koffie 1.50	Thé, de portie 1.50
Chocolade de portie 1.50	Warme wijn 2.50
Milk 1.50	Bouillon OXC 1.50
Koffie met melk 1.50	Cacao 1.50
Verschillende Ginge 2.50	
Koffie met melk 1.50	
Verschillende Ginge 2.50	
Verfrischingen	
Chocolade 1.25	Crassaappelsap 1.50
Lemon squash 1.50	Kruidenap 1.50
Limonades gazeuses 0.80	Bananasap 1.50
Ginger Beer 1.50	Maitrang champagne 1.50
"Strawling Dry Ginger Ale" 1.50	
Minerale Waters	
Spatwater 1/2 0.80	Apollinaris 1.50
Vichy 1.50	Schwepes rods 0.80
Wijnen	
Terija Vermouth 1.25	Porto roode 1.50
France 1.25	Porto witte 1.50
Dubonnet 1.25	Sherry 1.50
Cyrrh 1.25	Malaga 1.50
Groves superieur (1903) 1.50	Madera 1.50
Bordeaux - Chateau Léville Poytère - 1906 1.50	

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